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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3304
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1120
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0990
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1559
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD
DOE FOR HUEPER/THOMPSON
PLEASE PASS TO USTDA DAN STEIN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [EPET](#) [KPAO](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: "WARMING OF A PRODUCTIVE
TURKMEN-AMERICAN DIALOG" -- WITHIN LIMITS

REF: A. ASHGABAT 0061
[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 0058

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY: "Neytralniy Turkmenistan," the official Russian-language government newspaper, published an article summarizing Senator Richard Lugar's January 24 letter to President Berdimuhamedov. The article mentioned Lugar's points on proposed assistance projects, U.S. interest in expanding cooperation in hydrocarbons, and the offer of establishing the Nunn-Lugar Program in Turkmenistan. The article closed with Senator Lugar's hope to welcome Berdimuhamedov to Washington in the near future. However, it omitted Senator Lugar's offer of technical and financial experts from the oil and gas industry, encouragement to continue improving Turkmenistan's relationship with Azerbaijan and Georgia, request to consider U.S. companies for on-shore petrochemical exploration, and congratulations on abatement of the harassment of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reporters. The U.S.-Turkmen relationship has progressed rapidly, but the state media still practice "selective coverage" of controversial, to them, topics. END SUMMARY.

"NEYTRALNIY TURKMENISTAN" PROMINENTLY COVERS SENATOR LUGAR'S LETTER

[1](#)3. (U) The official Russian-language government newspaper, "Neytralniy Turkmenistan," published an article, "On the road to warming of a productive Turkmen-American dialog," on the front page (below the fold), summarizing a letter sent by Senator Richard Lugar to President Berdimuhamedov on January [1](#)24. Senator Lugar visited Turkmenistan January 11-12. Watan TV news and "Turkmenistan" newspaper (in Turkmen) also summarized the letter. Only the following sentence from the letter was duplicated word-for-word in the article: "I

enjoyed our conversation and appreciated your strong vision for Turkmenistan in numerous areas, including agricultural reform, energy cooperation, and student exchanges."

¶4. (U) The remainder of the article summarized Senator Lugar's letter, stating that the Senator was pleased about the progress of the (U.S.-Turkmen) partnership, noting the work done through USAID's humanitarian and agricultural sectors projects. According to the article, Senator Lugar said that every one of the areas (of assistance) presents a significant possibility for Turkmen-American cooperation, and that he is prepared to provide his personal support in the aims of strengthening and increasing productive ties. The article reported Senator Lugar addressed the United States' strong interest in expanding hydrocarbon cooperation and said the experience the United States has offered to Turkmenistan in this area could prove to be useful. The article also said that Senator Lugar asked Berdimuhamedov to consider taking part in the Nunn-Lugar Program, which is directed towards reducing global threats. The article closed with the Senator's warm and sincere thanks to Berdimuhamedov for the cordial meeting in Ashgabat, and with the his hope to welcome Berdimuhamedov in Washington and the U.S. Senate in the near future.

WHAT WAS NOT MENTIONED IN THE ARTICLE

¶5. (SBU) In the letter, Senator Lugar states that "United States' experience in management of oil and natural gas production, revenues, and government regulation may be useful in enhancing the capacity of the Turkmenistani energy sector. I am hopeful that our governments might also facilitate exchanges of experts in this area. Turkmenistan may also

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benefit from an international oil company's expertise in off-shore production and ability to provide project finance, as well as their proven technological expertise to exploit deep sub-salt gas on-shore. I...ask that you seriously consider the possibility of a joint venture on-shore." The "Neytralniy Turkmenistan" article also omits mention of comments in Senator Lugar's letter about the possibility of a Trans-Caspian Pipeline and the benefits this would bring to Turkmenistan. Finally, the article does not mention Senator Lugar's congratulations on the progress in Turkmenistan's relationships with Azerbaijan and Georgia, the benefits Azerbaijan and Georgia have gained vis-a-vis their respective sovereignty from the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and South Caucasus pipelines, and Azerbaijan and Georgia's wider cooperation with the United States on security and economic matters.

¶6. (SBU) Specifics on other pending proposals in the letter but absent from the newspaper article: partnerships between Texas A&M University and Turkmen universities, the Department of Agriculture's Faculty Exchange Program for Agricultural Economics, and a crop livestock forage production project with the University of Nevada/Reno. Also, the article did not mention Senator Lugar's acknowledgment and appreciation that Turkmenistan halted the harassment of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reporters.

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: The very mention in print of Senator Lugar's letter to President Berdimuhamedov, especially under such a positive headline, is worth noting. Some of the items omitted from the article tended to be the more controversial ones, such as a Trans-Caspian pipeline and the benefits to sovereignty Azerbaijan and Georgia gained from pipelines that bypassed Russia. Ashgabat is careful to ballance its big-power relationships and knows the Russians, Chinese, Iranians, and others pay close attention to press reports of meetings with visiting Americans. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND